We caught up recently with Mayahuel “Maya” Gomez O’Cadiz, a 2013 graduate of the Communication Department and a finalist for our top graduating student award for her graduation cycles. In this short interview, Maya graciously characterizes her path toward studying Communication in Madrid and then her subsequent arc of activity beyond our campus.

**Question:** Where are you now and what are you doing?

**Maya’s Answer:** I am currently in my second semester of my master’s program in International Affairs at The New School in NYC. I’m taking courses this semester to prepare for a summer program where I will be working on a social project in rural Colombia for two months.

**Q:** Exciting! Now, let’s step back a few years: How did SLU in Madrid come across your radar screen and what was your path toward enrolling on the campus?

**A:** Having gone to an arts high school where I majored in creative writing and film and television, I knew I wanted to study communication in college. I was living in California at the time and wanted to be near my family in Madrid but still wanted to continue with my American educational trajectory. I did some research and voila: SLU Madrid.

**Q:** It may only be a slight exaggeration to say that no one goes to college anymore for four years at the same campus, but you did that here in Madrid. Looking back with a little temporal distance, what do you find stands out memorably with regard to your experience here?

**A:** Interacting with the diverse international student body and community that SLU Madrid is stands out as the most unique and important experience I had at the university. There’s a lot to be said for having to constantly compare your views and opinions with those of people from around the world and it’s a big part of the reason why I decided to pursue my post-graduate studies in International Affairs.

**Q:** After graduating from SLU and before the turn to graduate school, you were teaching in Córdoba, Andalucía. What was it like and what did you learn in the shift form student to teacher?

**A:** Thanks to SLU Madrid I had the opportunity to be an English Language Assistant at a primary School in Madrid during my senior year. And that experience really prepared me for working in a classroom setting. However, classrooms in Madrid and in Andalucía are very different. There’s a different culture in the south of Spain and an adjustment to this new setting definitely took place. The English level of my students in Córdoba was much lower and their awareness of American culture was much more limited which was somewhat refreshing. I had to try very hard to keep students interested and engaged. Some of my biggest lessons learned teaching in Córdoba were that “lesson plans” almost never go as planned and that you have to be flexible and resourceful and be willing to switch it up completely.

**Q:** Ha ha ha, that demand you are describing to be extemporaneous is very high in a college classroom as well. But in another academic vein: You are now a published author via *The Undergraduate Journal of Ethnography*. Can you give us the back story on how your work got into print?

**A:** My awesome honors thesis advisor Daniel Chornet suggested I submit my paper to *The Journal of Undergraduate Ethnography (JUE)* as I did an ethnographic study of communication on the Spanish economic crisis. *The JUE* was gracious enough to want my paper in their Spring 2014 edition. Their editing team sent my paper back
three or four times until it was fit to print so there was a lot of work I did after I thought my paper was finished in order to get it published.

Q: What difference do you think studying communication has made so far in your trajectory through the world?

A: Having studied communication has made me a critically aware person. Let me make that more concrete. From analyzing, probably over-analyzing, day-to-day interactions to always second-guessing what the media has to say about a particular topic, communication studies has made me an analytical thinker. I also think studying communication has opened a lot of doors for me. It’s such a flexible and pervasive field that I feel prepared to pursue a variety of things, like teaching English and post-graduate studies in international affairs, all in a couple of short years.

Q: Well said! And mil gracias Maya, it’s mighty cool hangin’ with you!